

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
SAN ANTONIO DIVISION

NICHOLAS DeFOSSETT,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	CIVIL ACTION
vs.)	
)	FILE No. 5:19-cv-282
ALI BABA INTERNATIONAL FOOD)	
MARKET, INC., and SYRAN, LLC,)	
)	
Defendants.)	

COMPLAINT

COMES NOW, NICHOLAS DeFOSSETT, by and through the undersigned counsel, and files this, his Complaint against Defendants ALI BABA INTERNATIONAL FOOD MARKET, INC. and SYRAN, LLC, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.* (“ADA”) and the ADA’s Accessibility Guidelines, 28 C.F.R. Part 36 (“ADAAG”). In support thereof, Plaintiff respectfully shows this Court as follows:

JURISDICTION

1. This Court has original jurisdiction over the action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343 for Plaintiff’s claims pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*, based upon Defendants’ failure to remove physical barriers to access and violations of Title III of the ADA.

PARTIES

2. Plaintiff NICHOLAS DeFOSSETT (hereinafter “Plaintiff”) is, and has

been at all times relevant to the instant matter, a natural person residing in San Antonio, Texas (Bexar County).

3. Plaintiff is disabled as defined by the ADA.

4. Plaintiff is required to traverse in a wheelchair and is substantially limited in performing one or more major life activities, including but not limited to: walking, standing, grabbing, grasping and/or pinching.

5. Plaintiff uses a wheelchair for mobility purposes.

6. Plaintiff is also an independent advocate of the rights of similarly situated disabled persons and is a “tester” for the purpose of asserting his civil rights, monitoring, ensuring, and determining whether places of public accommodation are in compliance with the ADA. His motivation to return to a location, in part, stems from a desire to utilize ADA litigation to make Plaintiff’s community more accessible for Plaintiff and others, and pledges to do whatever is necessary to create the requisite standing to confer jurisdiction upon this Court so an injunction can be issued correcting the numerous ADA violations on this Property, including returning to the Property as soon as it is accessible (“Advocacy Purposes”).”

7. Defendant ALI BABA INTERNATIONAL FOOD MARKET, INC. (hereinafter “Ali Baba”) is a Domestic For Profit Corporation that transacts business in the state of Texas and within this judicial district.

8. Ali Baba may be properly served with process via its registered agent for service, to wit: Taufeiq Jebreel, 6446 Flint Rock, San Antonio, Texas 78238.

9. Defendant SYRAN, LLC (hereinafter “Syran”) is a Texas limited liability

company that transacts business in the state of Texas and within this judicial district.

10. Syran may be properly served with process via its registered agent for service, to wit: Daniel Ladere, 3834 Fredericksburg Road, San Antonio, Texas 78201.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

11. On or about February 21, 2019, Plaintiff was a customer at “Ali Baba,” a business located at 9307 Wurzbach Road, San Antonio, Texas 78240, referenced herein as “Ali Baba.”

12. Ali Baba is the lessee or sub-lessee of the real property and improvements that are the subject of this action.

13. Syran is the owner or co-owner of the real property and improvements that the Ali Baba is situated upon and that is the subject of this action, referenced herein as the “Property.”

14. Plaintiff lives approximately 8 miles from the Ali Baba and Property.

15. Plaintiff’s access to the business(es) located at 9307 Wurzbach Road, San Antonio, Bexar County Property Identification number 542168 (“the Property”), and/or full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, foods, drinks, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein were denied and/or limited because of his disabilities, and he will be denied and/or limited in the future unless and until Defendant is compelled to remove the physical barriers to access and correct the ADA violations that exist at the Ali Baba and Property, including those set forth in this Complaint.

16. Plaintiff has visited the Property at least once before as a customer and

advocate for the disabled. Plaintiff intends on revisiting the Property within six months or sooner, as soon as the barriers to access detailed in this Complaint are removed and the Property is accessible again. The purpose of the revisit is to be a regular customer, to determine if and when the Property are made accessible and to maintain standing for this lawsuit for Advocacy Purposes.

17. Plaintiff intends to revisit the Ali Baba and Property to purchase goods and/or services.

18. Plaintiff travelled to the Ali Baba and Property as a customer and as an independent advocate for the disabled, encountered the barriers to access at the Ali Baba and Property that are detailed in this Complaint, engaged those barriers, suffered legal harm and legal injury, and will continue to suffer such harm and injury as a result of the illegal barriers to access present at the Ali Baba and Property.

COUNT I
VIOLATIONS OF THE ADA AND ADAAG

19. On July 26, 1990, Congress enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act 42 U.S.C. § 12101 *et seq.*

20. Congress found, among other things, that:

- (i) some 43,000,000 Americans have one or more physical or mental disabilities, and this number is increasing as the population as a whole is growing older;
- (ii) historically, society has tended to isolate and segregate individuals with disabilities, and, despite some improvements, such forms of discrimination against individuals with disabilities continue to be a serious and pervasive social problem;

- (iii) discrimination against individuals with disabilities persists in such critical areas as employment, housing public accommodations, education, transportation, communication, recreation, institutionalization, health services, voting, and access to public services;
- (iv) individuals with disabilities continually encounter various forms of discrimination, including outright intentional exclusion, the discriminatory effects of architectural, transportation, and communication barriers, overprotective rules and policies, failure to make modifications to existing facilities and practices, exclusionary qualification standards and criteria, segregation, and relegation to lesser service, programs, activities, benefits, jobs, or other opportunities; and
- (v) the continuing existence of unfair and unnecessary discrimination and prejudice denies people with disabilities the opportunity to compete on an equal basis and to pursue those opportunities for which our free society is justifiably famous, and costs the United States billions of dollars in unnecessary expenses resulting from dependency and non-productivity.

42 U.S.C. § 12101(a)(1) - (3), (5) and (9).

- 21. Congress explicitly stated that the purpose of the ADA was to:
 - (i) provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities;
 - (ii) provide a clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards addressing discrimination against individuals with disabilities; and

* * * * *

- (iv) invoke the sweep of congressional authority, including the power to enforce the fourteenth amendment and to regulate commerce, in order to address the major areas of discrimination faced day-to-day by people with disabilities.

42 U.S.C. § 12101(b)(1)(2) and (4).

- 22. The congressional legislation provided places of public accommodation

one and a half years from the enactment of the ADA to implement its requirements.

23. The effective date of Title III of the ADA was January 26, 1992 (or January 26, 1993 if a defendant has 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less). 42 U.S.C. § 12181; 28 C.F.R. § 36.508(a).

24. The Ali Baba is a public accommodation and service establishment.

25. The Property is a public accommodation and service establishment.

26. Pursuant to the mandates of 42 U.S.C. § 12134(a), on July 26, 1991, the Department of Justice and Office of Attorney General promulgated federal regulations to implement the requirements of the ADA. 28 C.F.R. Part 36.

27. Public accommodations were required to conform to these regulations by January 26, 1992 (or by January 26, 1993 if a defendant has 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less). 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*; 28 C.F.R. § 36.508(a).

28. The Ali Baba must be, but is not, in compliance with the ADA and ADAAG.

29. The Property must be, but is not, in compliance with the ADA and ADAAG.

30. Plaintiff has attempted to, and has to the extent possible, accessed the violations enumerated above may not be a complete list of the barriers, conditions or violations encountered by Plaintiff and/or which exist at the violations enumerated above may not be a complete list of the barriers, conditions or violations encountered by Plaintiff and/or which exist at the Ali Baba and the Property in his capacity as a customer of the Ali Baba and Property and as an independent advocate for the disabled, but could

not fully do so because of his disabilities resulting from the physical barriers to access, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Ali Baba and Property that preclude and/or limit his access to the Ali Baba and Property and/or the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein, including those barriers, conditions and ADA violations more specifically set forth in this Complaint.

31. Plaintiff intends to visit the Ali Baba and Property again in the very near future as a customer in order to utilize all of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations commonly offered at the Ali Baba and Property and as an independent advocate for the disabled, but will be unable to fully do so because of his disability and the physical barriers to access, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Ali Baba and Property that preclude and/or limit his access to the Ali Baba and Property and/or the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein, including those barriers, conditions and ADA violations more specifically set forth in this Complaint.

32. Defendants have discriminated against Plaintiff (and others with disabilities) by denying his access to, and full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations of the Ali Baba and Property, as prohibited by, and by failing to remove architectural barriers as required by, 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv).

33. Defendants will continue to discriminate against Plaintiff and others with disabilities unless and until Defendants are compelled to remove all physical barriers that exist at the Ali Baba and Property, including those specifically set forth herein, and make

the Ali Baba and Property accessible to and usable by Plaintiff and other persons with disabilities.

34. A specific list of unlawful physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations which Plaintiff experienced and/or observed that precluded and/or limited Plaintiff's access to the Ali Baba and Property and the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations of the Ali Baba and Property include, but are not limited to:

(a) ACCESSIBLE ELEMENTS:

- (i) Accessible parking space and associated access aisle near the main entrance have a slope and cross-slope in excess of 1:48 in violation of section 502.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards and are not level. This violation made it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property.
- (ii) Accessible parking space near the main entrance has excessive vertical rises, is not level and therefore in violation of Sections 303.2 and 502.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation made it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property.
- (iii) The accessible parking spaces near the main entrance lacks properly marked access aisles in violation of section 502.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.
- (iv) The accessible parking space near the main entrance has an identification sign that is too low (less than 60 inches from the floor) in violation of section

502.6 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation made it difficult for Plaintiff to locate an accessible parking space.

- (v) Accessible parking space on the southern end of the Property has a slope in excess of 1:48 in violation of section 502.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards and is not level. This violation made it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property.
- (vi) On the southern end of the Property, the access aisle is not wide enough and is in violation of section 502.3.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation made it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property.
- (vii) On the southern end of the Property, the accessible parking space is not properly marked and is in violation of section 502.2 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation made it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property.
- (viii) On the southern end of the Property, the access aisle adjacent to the accessible parking space has a slope in excess of 1:48 in violation of section 502.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards and are not level. This violation made it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property.
- (ix) On the southern end of the Property, the access aisle is not clear, due to the presence of a column, and is in violation of section 502.4 of the 2010 ADAAG

standards. This violation made it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property.

(x) On the southern end of the Property there is an excessive vertical rise along the accessible route or path in violation of section 303.2 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation is located on route from the southern accessible parking space to the closest accessible ramp. This violation made it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access public features of the Property.

(xi) On the southern end of the Property, the Property has an accessible ramp leading from the accessible parking space to the accessible entrances with a slope exceeding 1:12 in violation of section 405.2 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation made it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the units of the Property.

(xii) On the southern end of the Property, there is an excessive vertical rise along the accessible ramp in violation of section 303.2 and 405.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation made it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access public features of the Property.

(xiii) On the southern end of the Property, the accessible ramp side flares have a slope in excess of 1:10 in violation of section 406.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation made it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the units of the Property.

(xiv) The walking surfaces of the accessible route inside the Property have a surface slope in excess of 1:20 in violation of section 403.3 of the 2010

ADAAG standards. This violation made it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the interior elements of the Property. As the accessible route is in excess of 1:20, it is considered an accessible ramp, moreover, it has a total rise greater than six (6) inches, yet does not have handrails in compliance with section 505 of the 2010 ADAAG standards, this is a violation of section 405.8 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards. This violation made it difficult for Plaintiff to access the interior elements of the Property.

(xv) The interior has walking surfaces lacking a 36 (thirty-six) inch clear width, due to a policy of placing items in the accessible route, in violation of section 403.5.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation made it difficult for Plaintiff to properly utilize public features at the Property.

(xvi) There are sales and services counters, including the deli counter, lacking any portion of the counter that has a maximum height of 36 (thirty-six) inches from the finished floor in violation of section 904.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards, all portions of the sales and service counter exceed 36 (thirty-six) inches in height from the finished floor. This violation made it difficult for Plaintiff to properly transact business at the Property.

(xvii) Defendants fail to adhere to a policy, practice and procedure to ensure that all facilities are readily accessible to and usable by disabled individuals.

(b) ALI BABA RESTROOMS:

- (i) The restrooms lack proper door hardware in violation of section 404.2.7 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to utilize the restroom facilities.
- (ii) The height of coat hook located in accessible restroom stall is above 48 (forty-eight) inches from the finished floor in violation of section 308.2.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to utilize the restroom facilities.
- (iii) The controls on the faucets require pinching and turning of the wrists in violation of section 309.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to utilize the restroom facilities.
- (iv) The mirror in the bathrooms exceeds the maximum height permitted by Section 603.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation made it difficult for the Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to properly utilize public features of the restroom.
- (v) The lavatories and/or sinks in the restrooms have exposed pipes and surfaces and are not insulated or configured to protect against contact in violation of section 606.5 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely utilize the restroom facilities.

- (vi) The grab bars/handrails adjacent to the commode are missing and violate section 604.5 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely utilize the restroom facilities.
- (vii) The door exiting the restroom lacks a proper minimum maneuvering clearance, due to the proximity of the door hardware to the adjacent wall and the restroom sink, in violation of section 404.2.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely utilize the restroom facilities.
- (viii) The violations enumerated above may not be a complete list of the barriers, conditions or violations encountered by Plaintiff and/or which exist at the The restrooms lack proper door hardware in violation of section 404.2.7 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to utilize the restroom facilities.
- (ix) The height of coat hook located in accessible restroom stall is above 48 (forty-eight) inches from the finished floor in violation of section 308.2.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to utilize the restroom facilities.
- (x) The controls on the faucets require pinching and turning of the wrists in violation of section 309.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to utilize the restroom facilities.

- (xi) The mirror in the bathrooms exceeds the maximum height permitted by Section 603.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation made it difficult for the Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to properly utilize public features of the restroom.
- (xii) The lavatories and/or sinks in the restrooms have exposed pipes and surfaces and are not insulated or configured to protect against contact in violation of section 606.5 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely utilize the restroom facilities.
- (xiii) The grab bars/handrails adjacent to the commode are missing and violate section 604.5 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely utilize the restroom facilities.
- (xiv) The door exiting the restroom lacks a proper minimum maneuvering clearance, due to the proximity of the door hardware to the adjacent wall and the restroom sink, in violation of section 404.2.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely utilize the restroom facilities.

35. The violations enumerated above may not be a complete list of the barriers, conditions or violations encountered by Plaintiff and/or which exist at the Ali Baba and Property.

36. Plaintiff requires an inspection of Ali Baba and Property in order to

determine all of the discriminatory conditions present at the Ali Baba and Property in violation of the ADA.

37. The removal of the physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations alleged herein is readily achievable and can be accomplished and carried out without significant difficulty or expense. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv); 42 U.S.C. § 12181(9); 28 C.F.R. § 36.304.

38. All of the violations alleged herein are readily achievable to modify to bring the Ali Baba and Property into compliance with the ADA.

39. Upon information and good faith belief, the removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Ali Baba and Property is readily achievable because the nature and cost of the modifications are relatively low.

40. Upon information and good faith belief, the removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Ali Baba and Property is readily achievable because Defendants have the financial resources to make the necessary modifications.

41. Upon information and good faith belief, the Ali Baba and Property have been altered since 2010.

42. In instances where the 2010 ADAAG standards do not apply, the 1991 ADAAG standards apply, and all of the alleged violations set forth herein can be modified to comply with the 1991 ADAAG standards.

43. Plaintiff is without adequate remedy at law, is suffering irreparable harm, and reasonably anticipates that he will continue to suffer irreparable harm unless and until Defendants are required to remove the physical barriers, dangerous conditions and

ADA violations that exist at the Ali Baba and Property, including those alleged herein.

44. Plaintiff's requested relief serves the public interest.

45. The benefit to Plaintiff and the public of the relief outweighs any resulting detriment to Defendants.

46. Plaintiff's counsel is entitled to recover its reasonable attorney's fees and costs of litigation from Defendants pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 12188 and 12205.

47. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12188(a), this Court is provided authority to grant injunctive relief to Plaintiff, including the issuance of an Order directing Defendants to modify the violations enumerated above may not be a complete list of the barriers, conditions or violations encountered by Plaintiff and/or which exist at the violations enumerated above may not be a complete list of the barriers, conditions or violations encountered by Plaintiff and/or which exist at the Ali Baba and Property to the extent required by the ADA.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays as follows:

- (a) That the Court find Ali Baba in violation of the ADA and ADAAG;
- (b) That the Court find Syran in violation of the ADA and ADAAG;
- (c) That the Court issue a permanent injunction enjoining Defendants from continuing their discriminatory practices;
- (d) That the Court issue an Order requiring Defendants to (i) remove the physical barriers to access and (ii) alter the subject Ali Baba to make it readily accessible to and useable by individuals with disabilities to the extent required by the ADA;

- (e) That the Court award Plaintiff his reasonable attorneys' fees, litigation expenses and costs; and
- (f) That the Court grant such further relief as deemed just and equitable in light of the circumstances.

Dated: March 19, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Dennis R. Kurz

Dennis R. Kurz

Attorney-in-Charge for Plaintiff

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